

Integrated Forest Products Research Grant

FY 2012 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: July 6, 2012



**U.S. Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture**

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Integrated Forest Products Research (FPR) Grant

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under **10.200**.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on **July 6, 2012 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time)**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Oversight Division; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: Policy@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Integrated Forest Products Research RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the Integrated Forest Products Research (FPR) for fiscal year (FY) 2012 to Support research, education and outreach for the forest products sector. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2012 is approximately \$1,260,000.

This notice identifies the objectives for FPR projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a FPR grant.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Forest Products Research (FPR) is authorized under subsection 2 (c)(1)(B) of the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act Public Law 89-106, 7 U.S.C. § 450i (c)(1)(B) .

This new Integrated Forest Products Research (FPR) grant is funded by Congress in the FY 2012 Appropriations as a special research grant to be awarded competitively. The intent is to stimulate the generation of new knowledge and transfer technologies that are necessary to balance the sustainable use of U.S. forest resources to maintain a vigorous, globally competitive domestic forest products industry. The FPR is uniquely designed to address the varying needs and opportunities of the different regions of the country but within a national needs framework. It is specifically designed to respond to current and emerging wood utilization issues, create new and improved value-added products, and provide technical information for the production of cross laminated timber from our Nation's wood supply, which are critical to the sustainability of the national economy.

B. Purpose and Priorities

Overall the Forest Products Research Program provides creative and innovative science and technology and advanced business practices that enhance the domestic and global competitiveness of the U.S. wood products industry. Specifically, it addresses utilization needs of hardwood, southern conifer and western conifer resources. Because of the limited amount of funding, this year's offering focuses on creating new and improved wood uses and value-added products.

This FPR program expects to fund at least three multi-institutional integrated projects (research and education or research and extension) for not more than \$420,000 over a period of three years maximum.

Applications are being solicited for the FY 2012 appropriation under the following special areas:

1. Innovative solutions to develop new industries/technologies that can optimally process/utilize large quantities of beetle-killed trees;
2. Developing strength design values for southern conifers;
3. Value improvement of low quality hardwoods; and
4. Developing structural composites, specifically Cross Laminated Timbers (CLT) using softwoods.

C. Special Area Description

1. Developing new industries to utilize beetle-killed trees: There is a critical need for innovative solutions to the current threat facing forest management efforts in the western U.S. that affects forest health, wildfire suppression costs, and rural economic development. According to the USDA Forest Service, mountain pine beetles have adversely impacted more

than 40 million acres of Western forests in recent years. The current outbreak is reported to be 10 times larger than previous outbreaks, and may be the largest forest insect blight ever seen in North America. Unusually hot, dry summers and mild winters have led to this unprecedented epidemic.

Though the wood from beetle-affected trees retains its commercial value for 8 to 12 years after the tree has died, the risk of crown fires that move through the forest canopy increases shortly after the trees die. After four or five years, as the dead trees fall to the ground, the threat of catastrophic fire is most severe.

Innovative solutions are needed to develop new industries that can process large quantities of beetle-killed timber. While opportunities may exist for significant bio-fuel production from this material, process optimization and product quality improvement can identify and encourage the highest value potential for specific locations throughout the western U.S.

2. Developing strength design values for southern conifers: Softwood structural lumber is valued based on its engineering properties. These engineering properties are mainly assigned via visual grading and to a lesser extent via machine grading. Major investigations into these lumber properties occur on the order of once every 20-25 years. In particular, for southern pine the last reviews occurred in 1966 and 1987 respectively. In the 1987 published review, lumber was tested during approximately 1980 and 1985.

In 2010 an additional round of testing was commenced. Unlike the 1987 testing which was undertaken at a more complete level, the 2010 study was conceived as more of a cursory study. For southern pine, the 2010 approach utilizes existing and antiquated size and grade models to predict lumber properties among 2x4, 2x6, 2x8, 2x10, and 2x12 sizes and the grades 1, 2, 3, and select structural. These size and grade models are decades old. They were last revised during the 1987 study. They are based on lumber that was procured from a forest resource that no longer exists.

During the past 25 years, changes in production forestry, timberland management, and lumber conversion technology have greatly changed the properties and relationships of structural lumber in various sizes and grades.

At present, the Southern Pine Inspection Bureau (SPIB), the rules writing agency for southern pine lumber has tested one size (2x4) and one grade (number 2) of lumber. Based on this limited testing, SPIB is proposing a 30% reduction in strength values for all pine structural lumber. All other things being equal, a change of this magnitude will impact the southern pine region at a projected level of \$800,000,000 per year.

With revised strength property models it is anticipated that more accurate strength and stiffness design values will be produced which will result in more safe and conservative engineering and appropriate utilization. Thus, in the interest of public service, there is a current and pressing need to study various grades and sizes of southern pine lumber, and to develop new size and grade models. This work will require the combined effort of multiple institutions throughout the southern pine region.

3. Value improvement of low quality hardwoods: One of the greatest challenges the wood industry in the Appalachian region faces today is the high volume of low value hardwoods in the forests associated with poor markets. It is estimated that about 40 to 50% of the timber volume is of low value. A 3% improvement in quality would roughly translate to a \$3-4 Billion increase in value. Very little investigative effort has been made to develop innovative ways to improve the timber quality in the Appalachian region. New and innovative strategies are needed to address this issue. Developing new product (engineered) or uses, or even new ways of utilization, can contribute to value improvement. Increasing yield through process optimization or through silvicultural intervention should be examined for its potential to generate profits.

4. Developing structural composites, specifically Cross Laminated Timbers (CLT) using softwoods: Cross Laminated Timber (CLT) provides a promising wood alternative to concrete assemblies. It provides alternative wood-based products and systems which will expand the use of wood-based products to non-residential and multi-story, to meet client demands and enable an efficient use of wood fiber, to maximize use of the resource and reduce environmental footprints.

Recently published ANSI standards for performance rated CLT panel production provides for the use of visually graded, machine stress rated, and structural composite lumber (SCL). The increased prevalence of plantation forests throughout the United States along with large volumes of introduced species (e.g. Norway Spruce in the northeastern U.S. with over 1.5 billion square feet of material currently non-structurally rated) provides a need for evaluation of their performance relative to panel mechanical and physical properties. Additional technology elements include the production of wood/SCL hybrid panels, evaluation of connection systems (including reinforcements), and durability of adhesive joints with wood/SCL hybrids.

There is a growing interest in the development of Cross Laminated Timbers in the US. Thus far, research work is minimal but Europe and Canada are in the advanced stage where commercial production has already been taking place. There is a need for the U.S. to accelerate its research to capture the significant potential for this product.

FPR encourages projects that develop content and programs suitable for delivery through the Cooperative Extension System's eXtension Initiative. Funds may be used to contribute to existing Communities of Practice (CoP) or to form a new CoP focused on Forest Products. Projects must align with the eXtension vision, mission, and values. A letter of acknowledgement from eXtension is required, and a letter of support may be required from one or more of the Communities of Practice.

For detailed guidance on how to partner with eXtension, go to <http://create.extension.org/node/2057>. The education component of a project must be reflected as an objective and not just an incidental activity. Innovation is key. Examples of educational components could be on: a) curricular design and materials development, b) graduate student preparation and enhancement for education, c) instruction delivery systems, d) a training course, e) student experiential learning, and f) student recruitment and retention.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. Approximately \$1,260,000 is available to fund applications in FY 2012.

Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Financial Management Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2012, applications are submitted to the FPR Program as new applications. A new application is a project proposal that has not been previously submitted to the FPR Program. All applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

C. Project Types

The FPR Program requests new applications. All applications must be multi-institutional (at least two institutions and a maximum of four) and multi-function (meaning Research and education or Research and Extension). The maximum funding for a project is \$420,000 for a maximum duration of three years. Thus, the Program expects to fund at least three projects. Priorities for funding are given to applications addressing any of the four special research areas described earlier (Part I, C. Special Area Description).

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by State agricultural experiment stations, land-grant colleges and universities, research foundations established by land-grant colleges and universities, colleges and universities receiving funds under the Act of October 10, 1962 (16 U.S.C. 582a et seq.), and accredited schools or colleges of veterinary medicine.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing or matching is not required.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA.

Applicants are advised to submit early to the Grants.gov system.

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR) (also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR, Part VII) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. If the organization is not prepared (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed PRIOR to submitting an application. It can take as much as two weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations the AR should go to **“Get Registered” on the Grants.gov left navigation bar (or go to http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov. A quick reference guide listing the steps is available as a 4-page PDF document at the following website: <http://www.grants.gov/assets/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf>.** Item 2. below mentions the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” Part II.1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains additional explanatory language regarding the registration process.

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. In order to access, complete and submit applications, applicants must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov. This software is essential to apply for NIFA Federal assistance awards. For basic system requirements and download instructions, please see http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp. To verify that you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader, Grants.gov established a test package that will assist you in making that determination. Grants.gov Adobe Versioning Test Package: <http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp>.
2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov>, click on “Apply for Grants” in the left-hand column, click on **“Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions,”** enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-SRGP-003808** in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.” This Guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about

how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms), **or submitting the application** then refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first (<http://www.grants.gov/>). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

Grants.gov customer support

1-800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [Federal Holidays](#).

Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov iPortal: Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7:00 A.M. - 9:00 P.M. ET). Get help now!

Please have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov, to help expedite your inquiry:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of Agency You Are Applying To
- Specific Area of Concern

See http://grants.gov/applicants/app_help_reso.jsp or <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for additional resources for applying electronically.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Parts V and VI of the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.” This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (i.e., content format, pdf file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. With documented prior approval, subsequent complete submissions of an application will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.gov provides online tools to assist applicants. Users will find a link to “Convert Documents to PDF” on http://grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp#pdf_conversion_programs.

For any questions related to the preparation of an application please review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable request for applications. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov
- Phone: 202-401-5048
- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time, excluding Federal holidays.

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of the FPR Program. See Part V, 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

b. Field 8. Project Narrative.

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 15 pages of written text regardless of whether it is single or double spaced and up to 5 additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum (20 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

PLEASE NOTE: Appendices to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. The addition of appendices should not be used to circumvent the page limit. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

a. Introduction: A clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives of the proposed activities should be included. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities which substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project including the work of key project personnel. Preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed project should be included. In addition, this section should include in-depth information on the following, when applicable:

- (1) Estimates of the magnitude of the problems/challenges and their relevance to stakeholders and to ongoing State-Federal food and agricultural research, education and extension programs.
- (2) Role of the stakeholders in problem identification, planning, and implementation and evaluation as appropriate.
- (3) Reasons for having the work performed at the proposing institution.

b. Objectives: Clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged statement(s) of specific aims of the proposed effort must be included in all proposals.

c. Methods: The procedures or methodology to be applied to the proposed effort should be explicitly stated. This section should include but not necessarily be limited to:

- (1) A description of stakeholder involvement in problem identification, planning, implementation and evaluation;
- (2) A description of the proposed project activities in the sequence in which it is planned to carry them out;
- (3) Techniques to be employed, including their feasibility and rationale for their use in this project;
- (4) Kinds of results expected;
- (5) Means by which extension and/or education activities will be evaluated;
- (6) Means by which data will be analyzed or interpreted;
- (7) Details of plans to communicate results to stakeholders and the public;
- (8) Pitfalls that might be encountered;
- (9) Limitations to proposed procedures; and
- (10) Demonstrated knowledge and/or experience in forest products.

d. Project Timetable: The proposal should outline all important phases as a function of time, year by year, for the entire project, including periods beyond the grant funding period.

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide includes information about the individuals for which a Senior/Key Person Profile must be completed, and details about the Biographical Sketch and the Current and Pending Support including a link to a suggested template for the Current and Pending Support.

5. R&R Personal Data – As noted in Part V, 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award.

6. R&R Budget

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

7. Supplemental Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

- a. **Field 2. Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code name (i.e., enter Forest Products Research) and the program code (i.e., enter FPR).
- b. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See Part VI, 1.6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Complete applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB on July 6, 2012 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

Applicants who have problems with the submission of an application to Grants.gov are encouraged to FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A. for Grants.gov contact information.

Correspondence regarding submitted applications will be sent using e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 10 days of the established deadline, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

Pursuant to Section 1473 of the National Agriculture Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended, 7 USC 3319, indirect costs or tuition remission are not allowable costs under section 2(c)(1)(B) projects, and no funds will be approved for this purpose. Further, costs that are a part of an institution's indirect cost pool (e.g., administrative or clerical salaries) may not be reclassified as direct costs for the purpose of making them allowable.

“NIFA has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.”

“The use of grant funds to plan, acquire or construct a building or facility is not allowed under this program. With prior approval, and in accordance with the cost principles set forth in 2 CFR part 220 (Circular No. A-21), some grant funds may be used for minor alterations, renovations, or repairs deemed necessary to retrofit existing teaching or research spaces in order to carry out a

funded project. However, requests to use grant funds for such purposes must demonstrate that the alterations, renovations, or repairs are essential to achieving the major purpose of the project. Grant funds may not be used for endowment investing.”

The award period is limited to 3 years in duration as this award is issued under the authority of Sections 2(c) of Pub. L. 89-106, 7 U.S.C. §450i(c).

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, section 1.9 in the document entitled “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.”

For information about the **status of a submitted application**, see Part III., section 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. Relevance of the application to program goals and objectives as described in Part I, B. **(30 Points)**
2. Innovativeness of the research, extension or education component of the application. **(20 Points)**
3. Adequacy of the proposal response to items listed in the Project Narrative, including a process for managing sub-awards made from NIFA funding. **(20 Points)**
4. Quality and extent of documented stakeholder involvement in application development. **(10 Points)**
5. Experience, accomplishments and time commitments of key project personnel. **(10 points)**
6. Appropriateness/Cost Effectiveness of requested budget. **(10 Points)**

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 340, Reston, Virginia 20191. Phone: (888) 349-7715. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis, as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. NIFA will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of NIFA shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of NIFA as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring re-competition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Director during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view NIFA award terms and conditions);
- (10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

2 CFR Part 220 – Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (OMB Circular A-21).

2 CFR Part 225 – Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments (OMB Circular A-87).

2 CFR Part 230 – Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122).

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21, A-87, and A-122, now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220,

225 and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224)), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3016 – USDA Implementation of Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR Part 215).

7 CFR Part 3021—USDA Implementation of Government-wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—USDA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Federal Assistance Programs-- General Award Administrative Provisions.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Grantees are to submit initial project information and annual and summary reports to NIFA's electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions. Details of annual and final technical reporting requirements also are included in the award terms and conditions.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact : Dr. Catalino A. Blanche, National Program Leader, Environmental Systems Division, Institute of Bioenergy, Climate and Environment, USDA NIFA; Tel. No. 202-401-4190, fax 202-401-1706, email: cblanche@nifa.usda.gov.

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

a) The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b) Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c) Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

d) Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e) The project period may be extended by NIFA without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed any applicable statutory limit or expiring appropriation limitation. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f) Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the

ADO prior to instituting such changes, if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

Please refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Federal Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions, for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.